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Report of the retreat of the coordinators of the RCM-Africa cluster

I. Opening of the session [agenda item 1]

1. The retreat of the regional coordination mechanism for Africa (RCM-Africa) was held on 13 and 14 November 2014, in Debre Zeit, Ethiopia. The retreat was co-chaired by Mr. Erastus Mwencha, Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission, and Mr. Abdalla Hamdok, Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa.

2. The agenda for the retreat was the following:

1. Opening of the session
2. Strengthening the regional coordination mechanism for Africa: follow-up of the outcomes of the fifteenth session of RCM-Africa
3. Reflection on the engagement between the African Union and the United Nations in the context of RCM-Africa: deepening the strategic relationship between the African Union and the United Nations
4. Aligning the framework of engagement of United Nations support to the African Union's strategic outcomes and outputs
 - Common African position on the post-2015 development agenda
 - African Union's Agenda 2063
 - African Union Commission strategic plan for 2014–2017 and work programme
 - Regional development cooperation framework
5. Other relevant information
 - Briefing on the previous meeting of the coordination committee
 - Discussion of the theme of the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa
 - Other matters

6. Recommendations

7. Closure of the session

3. The retreat was attended by representatives of the African Union Commission, the Economic Commission for Africa, the joint secretariat support office (African Union, Economic Commission for Africa and African Development Bank), the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa, the East African Community, the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the World Food Programme, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the United Nations Population Fund, the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Office to the African Union, the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa, the United Nations Development Programme, the World Health Organization, the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the International Labour Organization, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS and the United Nations Industrial Development Organization. The full list of participants is attached.

4. Mr. Adeyemi Dipeolu, Director of the Capacity Development Division, Economic Commission for Africa, welcomed the participants. He stressed the need for the United Nations to adapt continuously to the changing priorities of the African Union, and called for frank discussions among the participants with a view to strengthening RCM-Africa.

5. In his opening remarks, Mr. Abdalla Hamdok emphasized that the African Union, as the voice of the continent, was playing an important role by identifying the continent's regional priorities and framing Africa's common positions on global processes and issues such as the post-2015 development agenda and climate change.

6. He called for the United Nations family to recommit their support for the development priorities emerging from the African Union's Agenda 2063. RCM-Africa represented an excellent avenue for achieving the coherence and harmonization of United Nations support for the African Union in the area of development. The response to the Ebola crisis had highlighted the importance of the United Nations family working together and "delivering as one" to support Africa's development agenda. He concluded by emphasizing the importance that the African Union Commission attached to RCM-Africa, and that the mechanism must be used to further strengthen collaboration between the African Union and the United Nations.

7. Mr. Erastus Mwencha said that regional integration remained very important for Africa. In a bid to deepen the integration of the continent and bring Africa up to par with other regions, the African Union was pursuing programmes on the introduction of high-speed rail networks, enhanced continental aviation, increased energy supplies, food security, a continental free trade area, and peace and security. He stressed the need for stronger commitment from the United Nations family to achieving the goals enshrined in Agenda 2063. He also urged the United Nations to ensure that RCM-Africa was strengthened and anchored on a common principle of advancing the development agenda of the African Union. In addition, the clusters and subclusters should reflect on their work, with a view to increasing the efficiency of their support for the African Union. He concluded by highlighting some of the key challenges facing the

continent, including domestic resource mobilization to address the financing gap, and the need for a monitoring and evaluation mechanism to track Africa's development progress.

II. Strengthening the regional coordination mechanism for Africa: follow-up of the outcomes of the fifteenth session of RCM-Africa [agenda item 2]

8. A representative of the joint secretariat of RCM-Africa reminded the participants of the key recommendations made at the fifteenth session of RCM-Africa, which took place in Abuja, on 28 and 30 March 2014. The recommendations highlighted were:

(a) The RCM-Africa clusters should be aligned with the strategic outcomes of the African Union Commission's strategic plan for 2014–2017 and Agenda 2063;

(b) The regional development cooperation framework, which supported the implementation of programmes, should be an all-inclusive framework, based on a results-based management approach;

(c) The RCM-Africa secretariat should develop a monitoring and evaluation framework for tracking and assessing the implementation of the programmes and projects of the clusters, and the implementation of RCM-Africa recommendations;

(d) The RCM-Africa secretariat should consult with the secretariat of the United Nations Development Group on developing linkages between RCM-Africa, the subregional coordination mechanisms, the United Nations Development Group regional directors team and the United Nations country teams, with a view to strengthening coherence and coordination, and thereby ensuring better United Nations support for the African Union. In that regard, RCM-Africa should also work with the United Nations Inter-agency Task Force on Africa, chaired by the Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Africa;

(e) The Chairperson of the African Union Commission should inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the need for a new programme of support to the African Union, anchored on the pillars of the African Union's Agenda 2063. The necessary action should be taken to make the requisite submission to the United Nations by September 2014, to request budget support starting in the 2016–2017 budget cycle;

(f) The African Union Commission, in consultation with the United Nations, should set up a technical working group made up of representatives from the United Nations, the African Union, the NEPAD Agency, the regional economic communities and the African Development Bank to formulate a comprehensive, long-term United Nations programme of support for the African Union, including Agenda 2063 and the ten-year capacity-building programme.

Discussion

9. The participants took note of the presentation of the RCM-Africa secretariat. The cluster coordinators gave a brief account of the work of their clusters, focusing on the achievements and challenges. The participants discussed ways of reconfiguring the clusters. Some participants were of the view that the clusters should be aligned with the 14 specialized technical committees of the African Union, while others felt that the current number of clusters could be reduced from nine to four or five. After much deliberation, it was agreed that the clusters should be aligned to

either the five pillars or the seven outcomes of the African Union Commission's strategic plan for 2014–2017. It was proposed that the secretariat of RCM-Africa should work out the details of the new configuration and alignment of the clusters.

10. After an exchange of views on various mechanisms for mobilizing resources in support of the African Union, the participants agreed that RCM-Africa should support the African Union's report on alternative sources of financing for the African Union, which was adopted by the working group of African ministers of finance in October 2014.

11. On the successor programme to the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme for the African Union, the participants agreed that the working group established at the fifteenth session of RCM-Africa should begin its work immediately. The new programme should go beyond capacity-building, with a focus on partnerships for development and monitoring and evaluation mechanisms.

12. The participants reiterated the need for the Chairperson of the African Union Commission to inform the Secretary-General of the need for a new programme of support to the African Union, anchored on the pillars of the African Union's Agenda 2063.

III. Reflection on the engagement between the African Union and the United Nations in the context of RCM-Africa: deepening the strategic relationship between the African Union and the United Nations [agenda item 3]

13. Mr. Crispin Grey-Johnson, a consultant for ECA, gave a brief historical account of United Nations support for Africa, from the 1980s to the present day, including NEPAD and the AU Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme. He reminded the participants of the two triennial reviews of the current programme, and said that the main objectives of the reviews had been to ascertain whether the activities of the United Nations were sufficiently aligned with the needs of the African Union, including the NEPAD Agency and the regional economic communities. As a result of the reviews, recommendations were made on measures to be taken to enhance the management, coordination and monitoring of the RCM-Africa clusters and subclusters, and on the way forward.

14. He said that the triennial reviews had found that the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme did not have regular, predictable funding from the United Nations General Assembly, which had provided its mandate. Some 75 per cent of the recommendations made following the first triennial review had been implemented, but the challenge of resource mobilization remained.

15. Despite the challenges, the clusters and subclusters had achieved a great deal. Substantial efforts had been made to develop the capacity of the African Union through interventions that had advanced the organization's objectives and responded to its priorities at the subregional, regional and global levels.

16. He concluded by recommending that the working group established at the fifteenth session of RCM-Africa should begin work immediately on the elements of a new United Nations programme to replace the current Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme, which would come to an end in 2016. The new programme needed to go beyond capacity-building programmes to include mechanisms that would allow the continent to address collectively threats such as

outbreaks of communicable diseases, including Ebola, and issues such as climate change and political and human security.

17. Dr. Aisha Abdullahi, Commissioner for Political Affairs, African Union Commission, noted that future partnerships of the African Union must be anchored around the five pillars of the African Union Commission's strategic plan for 2014–2017. The African Union remained the only voice for the continent at global forums, and Agenda 2063 provided a foundation for the partnership between the African Union and the United Nations. The African Union Commission was a beacon for the implementation of gender equality and women's empowerment, as 50 per cent of its commissioners were women and it was led by a woman. She concluded by calling on the United Nations family to disseminate the African narrative and to support the African Union in its fight against corruption.

18. Mr. Christian Diguimbaye, coordinator of the joint secretariat support office (African Union, Economic Commission for Africa and African Development Bank), noted that the office was created in 1989 to coordinate the three institutions' efforts to implement the continental development agenda. He called for close collaboration between the office and RCM-Africa.

Discussion

19. The participants raised a number of concerns, including the growing level of income inequality, the exclusion of many Africans from the benefits of economic growth, the lack of progress on gender and women's empowerment, and the lack of clarity on how to move from development assistance to development partnerships. They also called for clear linkages between the regional development cooperation framework and the successor programme to the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme. The participants also noted that African Women's Decade was a very important agenda for African women and that therefore partners should fully support it.

20. Monitoring and evaluation of programmes and activities were also mentioned by participants as very important. The need for resource mobilization that was strategic, appropriate and predictable was stressed, so that programmes and activities could be implemented on time.

IV. Aligning the framework of engagement of United Nations support to the African Union's strategic outcomes and outputs [agenda item 4]

A. Common African position on the post-2015 development agenda

21. Mr. Anthony Mothae Maruping, Commissioner for Economic Affairs, African Union Commission, gave a presentation on the common African position on the post-2015 development agenda. Africa was ahead of other regions in terms of developing its own common position. The process had begun in 2012 with a series of consultations between the African Union Commission and key African stakeholders. Following the consultations, technical analysis was undertaken by the African Union Commission, culminating in a draft common African position on the post-2015 development agenda, which was adopted at the twenty-second ordinary session of the Assembly of the African Union, in January 2014. The position reflected Africa's priorities and development programmes, and was grouped into six pillars: structural economic transformation and inclusive growth; science, technology and innovation; people-centred development; environmental sustainability, natural resources management and disaster risk management; peace and security; and finance and partnerships.

22. The process of developing a common African position had been led by a high-level committee, chaired by President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, of Liberia, and made up of ten African Presidents, representing the five subregions of the continent, as follows:

- (a) Southern Africa: Namibia and South Africa;
- (b) East Africa: Ethiopia and Mauritius;
- (c) Central Africa: the Republic of the Congo and Chad;
- (d) West Africa: Liberia and Guinea;
- (e) North Africa: Algeria and Mauritania.

23. He stressed that the post-2015 development agenda represented a unique opportunity for Africa to articulate its common priorities, opportunities and challenges. Agenda 2063 was Africa's attempt to address its challenges, with a view to building a peaceful, integrated, people-centred and prosperous continent. The common African position was a critical milestone towards the realization of Agenda 2063, and provided a good opportunity for Africa to complete the unfinished business of the Millennium Development Goals. He further noted that the common position had been captured in the new sustainable development goals. The realization of Africa's development agenda required: productive capacities development, notably in the areas of infrastructure and agriculture; industrial and services sectors development; science, technology and innovation; value addition; youth development and engagement; women's empowerment; and sustainable natural resources management.

24. He said that the common African position had been officially launched in N'Djamena, in February 2014, by the high-level committee. President Sirleaf had also presented the position to African ministers at the seventh Joint Annual Meetings of the Economic Commission for Africa Conference of African Ministers of Finance, Planning and Economic Development and African Union Conference of Ministers of Economy and Finance, which took place in March 2014 in Abuja. In addition, the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, had presented the position on the margins of the ministerial conference of the Non-Aligned Movement, in May 2014 in Algiers.

B. African Union's Agenda 2063

25. Mr. Mandla Madonsela, Director for Strategic Policy Planning, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Resource Mobilization, African Union Commission, gave a presentation on the African Union's Agenda 2063. Agenda 2063 represented a new phase in the efforts of the African Union to upscale its efforts to advance the development agenda of the continent, so as to achieve the African Union's vision of an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa, driven by its own citizens and representing a dynamic force in the global arena.

26. Agenda 2063 was a strategic framework for the socioeconomic transformation of the continent that sought to accelerate the implementation of existing continental initiatives for growth and sustainable development. The Agenda was focused on eight key areas: African identity and renaissance; the struggle against colonialism and the right to self-determination of people still under colonial rule; regional integration; social and economic development; peace and security; democratic governance; determining Africa's destiny; and Africa's place in the world. Africa's aspirations, as distilled from the consultations carried out, were:

- (a) A prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development;
- (b) An integrated continent, politically united, based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and Africa's renaissance;

- (c) An Africa of good governance, with respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law;
- (d) A peaceful and secure Africa;
- (e) An Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, values and ethics;
- (f) An Africa whose development is people-driven, especially relying on the potential offered by its women and young people;
- (g) Africa as a strong, resilient and influential global player and partner.

27. He said that a draft framework for Agenda 2063 had been presented to Heads of State and Government at the twenty-third ordinary session of the African Union, in Malabo, in July 2014. The Heads of State and Government had called for further consultations to be held with various sectors and groups on the continent, and had urged member States to integrate Agenda 2063 into their development plans through a people-driven process.

28. Agenda 2063 built on the achievements of past continental initiatives, such as the Lagos Plan of Action, the Abuja Treaty and the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), and had been phased into short-, medium- and long-term horizons. Agenda 2063 represented a collective effort and an opportunity for Africa to regain the power to determine its own destiny. To achieve the goals of the Agenda, he called for the acceleration of the process of continental integration. He also informed the participants that the first ten-year implementation plan and a monitoring and evaluation framework for Agenda 2063 were being prepared and would be presented to Heads of State and Government in 2015.

29. He then outlined some areas that would require United Nations support. Those included: support to national systems to conduct national consultations and awareness-raising campaigns on Agenda 2063; providing a forum for regional professional and business associations and civil society organizations to discuss the first ten-year plan; helping member States to design and implement processes for the integration of Agenda 2063 and the ten-year plan into national visions, plans and systems, including the harmonization of statistics; developing indicators for the implementation of the first ten-year plan; and developing and monitoring regional training programmes for national and regional development management within the context of Agenda 2063.

C. African Union Commission strategic plan for 2014–2017 and work programme

30. Mr. Mandla Madonsela then gave a presentation on the African Union Commission's strategic plan for 2014–2017. The African Union's role was to spearhead the continent's rapid integration, prosperity and sustainable development by promoting political and economic unity, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation, as well as developing new global partnerships.

31. In a bid to achieve the vision of the Union, the African Union Commission had since its inception developed and implemented two successive strategic plans (frameworks for the periods 2004–2007 and 2009–2012). The Commission's third strategic plan (2014–2017) had been prepared to guide the interventions and programmes of the Commission in the medium term. The new plan took into account the shortcomings of the previous plans, and had been developed with an elaborate results framework. The plan also clarified the roles and responsibilities of key actors and stakeholders, both internally and externally. The goals and objectives of the plan would be met through the implementation of programmes and activities derived from five pillars: peace and security; social, economic and human development;

integration, cooperation and partnerships; shared values; and institutions, capacity-building and communication.

32. The overall goal of the strategic plan was to “accelerate progress towards an integrated, prosperous and inclusive Africa, at peace with itself, playing a dynamic role in the continental and global arena, effectively driven by an accountable, efficient and responsive Commission”. To that end, the Commission had identified eight priorities:

(a) Promoting peace and stability, including regional initiatives, good governance, democracy and human rights, as a foundation for inclusion, security and the development of the continent and its people;

(b) Expanding agricultural production, developing the agro-processing and businesses sectors, increasing market access and achieving Africa’s collective food self-sufficiency and nutrition through the promotion of smallholder agriculture and sound environment and natural resource management, including climate change;

(c) Promoting inclusive economic development and industrialization through the acceleration of infrastructure development projects, to aid economic integration and the utilization of the continent’s mineral and other natural resources;

(d) Building Africa’s human capacity through the prioritization of primary health care and prevention; education, skills development and investment in science, research and innovation; access to clean water and sanitation; and the inclusion of vulnerable groups;

(e) Mainstreaming the participation of women and young people in all the priorities and activities of the Union and the continent;

(f) Implementing resource mobilization strategies, with particular emphasis on alternative sources of funding and additional funding, to enable Africa to finance its programmes and development;

(g) Strengthening a people-centred Union through the active communication of the programmes and mission of the African Union and the participation of member States and other stakeholders in defining and implementing the African agenda;

(h) Strengthening the institutional capacity of the African Union Commission, the regional economic communities and other organs, and the Union’s relations with its partners.

33. Given that the Commission’s strategic plan had been drafted before Agenda 2063 was announced, once the Agenda had been finalized and approved, the plan would be revised to accommodate any priority areas left unaddressed.

D. Regional development cooperation framework

34. A representative of the RCM-Africa secretariat presented the regional development cooperation framework. The presentation focused on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, which in his view provided a useful framework that could be adopted for better coordination of RCM-Africa, in particular in terms of its formulation of United Nations support in direct response to a country’s national development plan. Joint programming among

United Nations agencies could yield better coordination and mobilization of resources for programme implementation by the agencies.

35. He then presented a proposal for a regional development cooperation framework, modelled on the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, as a vehicle for United Nations support to the African Union organizations. The proposed framework was based on the following guiding principles:

(a) It should be anchored on the African Union's Agenda 2063 and implementation frameworks, such as the African Union Commission's strategic plan for 2014–2017, together with the related plans of the NEPAD Agency, the regional economic communities and other African Union organs;

(b) Cluster work plans should be based on selected activities from the strategic plans and priorities of African Union organizations.

36. Alignment of RCM-Africa with the African Union Commission's strategic plan for 2014–2017 would naturally call for a reconfiguration of the RCM-Africa clusters. He also suggested that the planning cycles of United Nations agencies and the African Union Commission's strategic plan cycle for 2014–2017 should be harmonized.

37. The meeting took note of the presentations and continued with the meetings of the nine clusters to further reflect on the issues raised in the presentations, with a view to coming up with a proposal for the optimal alignment of the clusters to the strategic plan for 2014–2017.

38. The meeting received the reports of the clusters' meetings. There was no clear consensus on how the clusters should be reconfigured. The participants called upon the RCM-Africa secretariat to consult with key stakeholders and submit proposals for the reconfiguration of the clusters at the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa.

V. Other relevant information [agenda item 5]

A. Briefing on the previous meeting of the coordination committee

39. The participants were briefed on the previous meeting of the coordination committee (African Union, Economic Commission for Africa, African Development Bank and regional economic communities). The African Union Commission would continue to work on accelerating eight flagship projects, towards the integration of the continent: a high-speed rail network; a commodity strategy; African aviation; a common African passport; a continental free trade area; the Inga dam; promoting private sector involvement; and a communication strategy.

B. Discussion of the theme of the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa

40. The participants suggested that the theme of the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa should be "United Nations system support for the African Union 2015 Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Agenda 2063". Participants were asked to reflect further on the theme and provide feedback to the RCM-Africa secretariat, if any.

C. Other matters

41. The participants were informed by the secretariat of RCM-Africa that the first meeting of the technical working group had taken place on the margins of the retreat, to discuss the modalities of its work. The group had agreed on the following:

(a) The Deputy Chairperson of the African Union Commission and the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa, who are the co-Chairs of RCM-Africa, will co-chair and lead the work of the group;

(b) The membership of the group should be expanded to include the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa and the United Nations Office to the African Union;

(c) A letter should be sent to the regional economic communities to ask them to formally designate their representative(s);

(d) A draft letter from the Chairperson of the African Union addressed to the Secretary-General of the United Nations, on the successor programme to the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme, should be sent to the Office of the Chairperson of the African Union by Friday 21 November 2014 for signature;

(e) The RCM-Africa secretariat should prepare an action plan with time frames and assigned responsibilities for the group;

(f) The consultant engaged by the RCM-Africa secretariat should hold consultations with key stakeholders;

(g) The report of the group should be finalized and submitted to the meeting of the coordinators of the clusters and subclusters of RCM-Africa in February 2015;

(h) The final report of the group should be submitted for adoption at the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa, in March 2015.

VI. Recommendations [agenda item 6]

42. At the end of the retreat, the following recommendations were made:

(a) The structure of RCM-Africa should be aligned to the African Union Commission's strategic plan for 2014–2017 in the short term, the ten-year implementation plan in the medium term, and Agenda 2063 in the long term.

(b) RCM-Africa should lobby member States to encourage them to approve the recommendations contained in the African Union's report on alternative sources of financing for the African Union.

(c) The Chairperson of the African Union Commission was urged to inform the Secretary-General of the United Nations of the need for a new programme of support to the African Union, built around the pillars of Agenda 2063.

(d) The technical working group established at the fifteenth session of RCM-Africa should begin its work immediately, to ensure that the new ten-year programme goes beyond capacity-building, and focuses on partnerships for development and monitoring and evaluation of programmes. In that regard, the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa should be invited to

join the technical working group, to promote and raise awareness of the work of the group at the Headquarters of the United Nations.

(e) Future engagement between the United Nations and the African Union should be anchored around the following key principles:

- (i) A medium- to long-term partnership programme with a clear strategic focus, based on the priorities of the African Union;
- (ii) Resource mobilization that is strategic, appropriate and predictable;
- (iii) Monitoring and evaluation, with benchmarks, time frames and targets;
- (iv) Mutual accountability framework;
- (v) Communication and advocacy.

(f) The RCM-Africa secretariat should consult with key stakeholders and make proposals to the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa on the reconfiguration of the clusters, to align them with the African Union's strategic plan for 2014–2017 and Agenda 2063.

(g) The participants proposed that the theme of the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa should be "United Nations system support for the African Union 2015 Year of Women's Empowerment and Development towards Agenda 2063".

(h) The membership of the technical working group on the development of a successor programme to the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme should be expanded to include the Office of the Special Advisor on Africa and the United Nations Office to the African Union.

(i) The report of the technical working group on the development of a successor programme to the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme should be finalized and submitted to the meeting of the coordinators of the clusters and subclusters of RCM-Africa in February 2015.

(j) The final report of the working group should be submitted for consideration and adoption at the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa.

VII. Closure of the session [agenda item 7]

43. In his closing remarks, Mr. Maruping stressed the need for the United Nations family to support the African Union, in particular Agenda 2063 and the strategic plan for 2014–2017. Collaboration between the United Nations and the African Union should be strengthened, with a view to advancing the development agenda of the continent. In addition, a strategy on monitoring and evaluation was needed to ensure that programmes and activities were continuously reviewed, to enhance the effectiveness of cooperation. Given the ultimate goal of the African Union to eliminate poverty in Africa and enhance human development, the partnership between the United Nations and the African Union should work on the development of Africa's human resources and the empowerment of women, young people and people with disabilities. In that regard, the proposed theme of the sixteenth session of RCM-Africa was appropriate and timely. He concluded by urging the participants to take stock of the achievements of RCM-Africa and to build on the consensus and spirit developed in Debre Zeit to strengthen cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union.

44. Mr. Abdalla Hamdok echoed the sentiments expressed by Dr. Maruping, and added that the retreat had covered all aspects of the work of RCM-Africa, its achievements and future cooperation between the United Nations and the African Union. The retreat had fully addressed the achievements and challenges of the Ten-Year Capacity-Building Programme, and useful suggestions had been made on a framework for the successor programme. He called upon the participants to reflect further on the cluster system of RCM-Africa and how the clusters could be reconfigured and aligned to the strategic framework of the African Union Commission and Agenda 2063. He agreed with the proposed theme for the sixteenth session, adding that the important role women played in development should not be underestimated. He ended by thanking all the participants for sharing their knowledge and rich experience, and for their effective contribution to the deliberations and the success of the retreat. He concluded by thanking and commending Mr. Erastus Mwencha for his tireless commitment, dedication and exemplary leadership of the RCM-Africa process.

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